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THE MATHEMATICS TEACHER

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EDITORIAL.

It would seem appropriate to call the attention of the members of our association to some obligations that rest upon them. Any organization to be most effective must be thoroughly alive and active. This energy must show in all its

Our Association. activities and permeate all its membership. The officers and members of the Council must be particularly alive and active as it is on this group of members that the business of the association rests. They are the guiding influence of all its activities and should feel keenly the responsibility placed upon them. It is evident, however, that not all members of the Council take this responsibility seriously enough, if the small attendance at some of the meetings is an indication. For the good of our association there should be a marked improvement in interest and attendance on the part of the members of the Council.

Not only must the Council be interested and active but the other members of the association must catch the spirit and be more ready to do their share in the way of taking part and interesting others in becoming members. The territory of the Middle States and Maryland should furnish not less than one thousand members, and our association would soon have that many if every member would interest at least one other to join. In doing this they would be doing both themselves and the new members a service in that every new member makes possible and a more influential organization.

The papers read at the Philadelphia meeting of the Association of Teachers of Mathematics in the Middle States and Maryland, from the standpoint of those not in the teaching profession,

throw an interesting light on the condition of mathematics teaching when these men were in school. As long as thoughtful men go on record as believing that the chief value of the study of mathematics is to cultivate the ability of undertaking an uninteresting and disagreeable task, or to show what vocation the boy is not fitted for, we still have something to learn about how to teach.

Point of View

It is unfortunate that teachers so often lack a definite idea of the aim, both of the subject as a whole and of definite parts of it, for, if the teacher is at sea as to his goal, it is little wonder that such ideas as have been quoted come to be believed:

An interesting idea, based on a misunderstanding of correct mathematical teaching, is that of "non-mathematicians" spoken of in one of the papers. In this theory, many of us are judged as totally lacking in mathematical sense, and, therefore, incapable of benefit from its study. I venture to say that any expert teacher of mathematics will support the statement that there are almost, if not quite, no such people as normal "non-mathematicians" in the sense of those incapable of improving their reasoning by its study. That many do not improve their reasoning is unfortunately true, but the fault in such cases is usually with the teaching, not with the subject or its students. Other notable fallacies are the survival of the Puritan idea that to be beneficial the dose must be nauseous, so mathematics made interesting, therefore, fails of its aim, and the statement that a clear thinker on general matters cannot always be taught to think clearly on mathematics. One speaker even asserts that the one thing no one would claim for mathematics is that it teaches good judgment. Most of us believe that if mathematics has one great value to the student who is not to use it in his profession, it is its power to improve judgment and logical ability.

Fortunately, as the teaching of mathematics improves, such mistaken ideas of its aims and results will appear less often.